



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WSDA grants increase sales for small-scale farms

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) in January awarded more than \$182,000 in grants to 12 projects designed to increase sales for small-scale farms. The grants, which are the second round of projects sponsored by WSDA, were developed from federal funds received in October of 2001.

“Our goal is to assist small farmers and fishermen who want to sell their products to local consumers at farmers markets, retail stores, restaurants and institutions. With projects funded by these grants, farms receive increased revenue, consumers receive fresh high-quality food, and we enhance our local community food system,” says Kelli Sanger, coordinator of WSDA’s Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program.

Projects funded in the first round of grants are already showing positive results. For example, with \$10,900 awarded last year, the Bellingham Farmers Market conducted a promotional campaign that increased sales for small farm vendors by 9 percent over 2001. The market experienced its highest sales since 1995, and increased revenue by more than \$80,800.

The following statewide projects were approved:

Washington State University (WSU) - \$13,930 to research and evaluate safe storage and handling practices for the sale of fresh meats at farmers markets, and to train Washington farmers on food safety and “Good Agricultural Practices.” Contact: Richard Dougherty, Food Science Specialist, (509) 335-0972.

WSU Small Farms Program - \$14,195 to conduct “Rapid Market Assessments” at farmers markets across the state, and train managers and board members who are interested in improving their markets. This project will increase sales for small farms by improving farmers markets’ customer and vendor base and sharing successful strategies with other markets. Contact: Vance Corum, Direct Marketing Coordinator, (360) 576-6030.

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance - \$16,000 to start up a new Saturday market in Seattle’s Magnolia neighborhood. This market is modeled after several successful Seattle neighborhood markets, and will provide increased sales opportunities for small farms across the state. Contact: Karen Kinney, (206) 632-5234.

Eastern Washington projects include:

Partnership for a Sustainable Methow - \$10,486 to study the feasibility of building and operating a U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified mobile livestock processing unit in Okanogan County. The unit is part of a

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larger project to allow livestock producers in the county to sell meats certified by USDA directly to customers by the pound. Contact: Sue Koptonak, Executive Director, (509) 997-1050.

Spokane Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau - \$15,000 to increase profitability, livability and economic viability of the Green Bluff agricultural community in Spokane County by promoting the community as a destination for agricultural products, activities and events. Funding will provide for directional and promotional signage for the region. Contact: Jeanna Shelley, Director of Tourism Development, (509) 742-9372.

Western Washington projects include:

Cascade Harvest Coalition - \$27,050 to work with the University of Washington to develop an ordering, delivery and invoicing system so that small farmers can collaboratively market their produce directly to UW food services. Contact: Wendy McClure, Project Leader, (425) 259-1755.

Island Grown Farmers Cooperative - \$7,000 to study the feasibility of selling grass-fed beef, pork and lamb meat products directly to consumers at a retail meat cutting facility. Contact: Bruce Dunlop, Project Manager, (360) 468-4620.

Jefferson County Farmers Market Association - \$20,000 to promote the farmers market in Port Townsend. This will make consumers more aware of the farmers market as a source of fresh, high-quality regional and organic food products, and increase sales opportunities for small farmers. Contact: Will O'Donnell, Chair, (360) 732-5054.

Pike Place Market - \$20,000 to expand the Pike Place Senior Market Basket Community Supported Agriculture program by providing transportation solutions. The program delivers fresh fruits and vegetables from Washington small farms to low-income seniors in King County. Contact: Michele Catalano, Project Leader, (206) 774-5250.

UW Washington Sea Grant Program - \$15,500 to develop a business plan to allow fishermen to sell their catch directly to the public by developing a business plan and opening up a "Fisherman's Wharf" in Bellingham where fishermen can sell their catch directly to the public. The project will increase the value of Whatcom County's commercial fishing industry and provide the public with a direct source of fresh-caught fish. Contact: Pete Granger, Marine Advisory Services Leader, (206) 685-9261.

Whatcom County Agriculture Preservation Committee - \$11,750 to promote the "Whatcom Fresh" label in grocery stores, restaurants and institutions as a source of fresh high-quality foods produced in Whatcom County. The project will increase the commitment of retailers and restaurants to buy and promote local food products and increase the economic viability of food producers in the county. Contact: Derek Long, Project Director, (360) 303-7776.

Willapa Community Development Association - \$11,500 to develop a Friday market in conjunction with the established Wednesday and Saturday markets in Raymond. This project will provide recreation and a source of fresh fruits, vegetables and seafood for residents and visitors heading to the Washington coast. Contact: Carol Dunsmoor, Willapa Public Market Manager, (360) 942-4700.

In addition to grants, the Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program provides small farms with direct marketing assistance and publishes The Handbook of Regulations for Direct Farm Marketing, better known as “The Green Book.” For a free copy of the handbook, or the program’s annual report, call Kelli Sanger at (360) 902-2057 or e-mail ksanger@agr.wa.gov.

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